

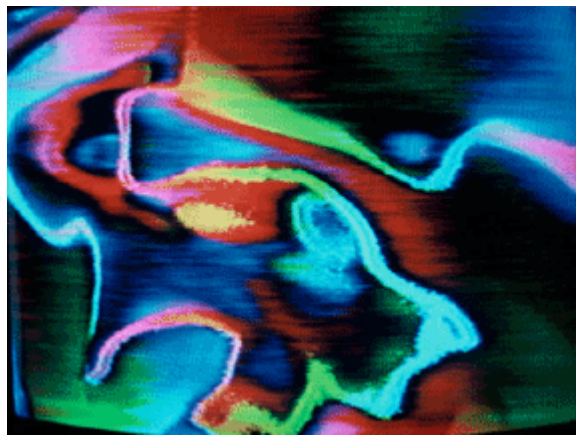
"Evolution Is Relentless: Analog is but a Dream..."

by Carol Goss

(An excerpt of the essay appears in The Squealor, winter/spring 2004 issue, pages 12-13,
a publication of Buffalo Media Resources)

We are still at the very beginning of the history of recorded motion images. This includes: the stroboscope, the kinoscope, 20th century cinema and DVDs. I directed a one act play for NBC-TV in Washington DC in 1968 - before videotape. We are now nearly post-disc. Analog is but a dream, and that means not only analog video, but also film. Evolution is relentless.

From the artist's perspective, however, technology should be additive, not subtractive or competitive. There is no way to compare images captured with a tube camera, fed through an oscillator and then into an analog colorizer, with images captured digitally and then altered and animated on a computer. The vivid color of Topography, created on the Paik-Abe Synthesizer, is one of the first video pieces I made at the Experimental Television Center. The analog circuitry of the board allowed 'illegal' color signals, which would accumulate, intensify and alter hues at the borders of shapes.



Topography © Carol Goss 1974

In a recent piece, Zwischenraum, digitally taped images are altered in the computer and then arranged in constantly shifting relationships.



Zwischenraum © Carol Goss 2003

Analog is lush, hot and dangerous. Digital is cool, precise and discrete. There is a qualitative difference between them that goes beyond issues of resolution. The immediacy of analog synthesis meant we could do live performance in the 1970s, creating and animating images in real-time. This is only possible just now with computers. The specificity of digital meant we could have loss-less dubs and do field accurate postproduction. This was very difficult with analog.

The era we see in the rear view mirror, the pre-urban time when humans related primarily to Nature, is analog in character. It is magnetic, influenced by the stars, with undulating rhythms. The era we are now deep into is the Machine Age. It began with the Enlightenment, gained momentum with the Industrial Revolution, and now is pervasive. The Machine Age is digital in character.

Quantum physics assures us of the simultaneous absolute and relative positions of electrons. The analog paradigm is the electron oscillating between two addresses. The digital paradigm is the electron having a fixed address.

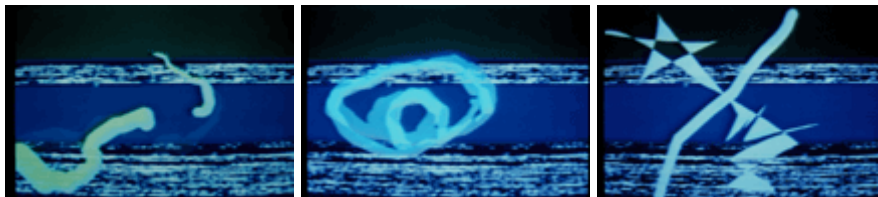
Here are three images from Rings/Lovers, a piece in which the image is very slowly transformed. The rhythm is rather like the waxing and waning of the moon.



Rings/Lovers © Carol Goss 1975

The RF feedback and tube camera made the three-dimensional illusion possible, but you have to believe it before you can see it. Motion resulted from the interplay between the artist and the feedback loop, which was alive. The analog image creation process relies more on aesthetic intuition than rational technique.

Early digital animation allowed more control of form. These images from S-Construct are staccato with very dramatic linear punctuations. Each change of shape was hand drawn. Motion had to be simulated in a frame editing process similar to cell animation in film.



S-Construct © Carol Goss 1992

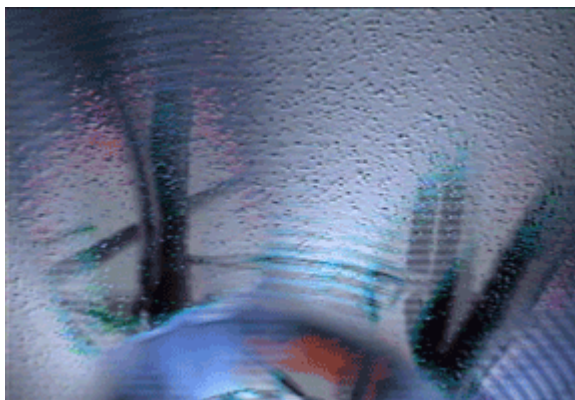
The above images from Rings/Lovers and S-Construct convey the essential differences between analog and digital motion imaging. When creating a new piece, however, technology is not the primary concern. One meditates on a relationship and uses the instruments at hand to express the implications of that relationship. Ultimately, it all becomes a whole, and the media and its content become inseparable.

The Not Still Art Festival, which I first organized in 1996, screens abstract and non-narrative electronic motion imaging. Initially there were video pieces and animated pieces. Now there are pieces combining both and it is impossible to know where the animation begins and the video leaves off. The hyperrealism direction digital animation took for so many years is now modified by more painterly 2D visions.

Digital promises us much. And eventually digital will approximate analog. Particle animation can create dirty, noisy surfaces and “natural” movement, which simulates the laws of physics, instead of following them. We will be able to create and collaborate in these virtual environments in real-time.

It is a richness to have the option to be loose and erratic or obsessive and exact. In Zwischenraum machines are juxtaposed with nature. You see and here the fans, the cars, the birds, the heat, the ice. There is a play of opposites. I like to name pieces after they are completed. Only then do I know what they are saying.

Zwischenraum is a German word in physics which means “the space between things.” The Japanese have a wonderful understanding of empty space, which in the West we call “negative space”. Most likely it is the concept of ‘digital’ which provoked my meditation on this space between things. The result is a piece which plays with time, place and sensation. The ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of the piece are now inextricably entwined.



Zwischenraum © Carol Goss 2003

Author: Carol Goss co-founded Improvising Artists with jazz pianist, Paul Bley, in 1974 and the Not Still Art Festival in 1996. She has collaborated with Walter Wright, Skip Sweeney, Steve Rutt, William S. Burroughs, Jaco Pastorius, Pat Metheny and others. ImprovArt.com distributes her work and she is currently editing a book of her collected essays, entitled Driven to Abstraction, for Berkeley Hills Books.

This essay and all images and video are copyrighted by Carol Goss 2004. All Rights Reserved

[Return to Home Page](#)